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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to discern reading habits of adult basic education (ABE) and General Educational Development (GED) students in two Mississippi junior colleges. A sample of 217 students was administered a questionnaire about reading habits. The sample was studied as a whole and by the demographic variables of race, gender, age (14-19; 20-29; 30-39; 40-49; 50-67), and reading level based on their Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) scores (5.0 or less; 5.1-7.9; or greater than 8.0). The most salient conclusion was that as a group, they were by no means nonreaders, though they spent less time reading than does the general population. Most reading was "educational" (including news), and least was "job related" and "recreational." Though most have read a book (or part of a book such as a bible) in the last six months, they are generally not book owners; most do subscribe to or buy regularly a newspaper or magazine. A plurality (44 percent) felt they were "good" readers. Responses to several questionnaire items varied by race, age, and TABE score. Suggestions were made to teach reading to similar groups by using materials in which they have professed an interest, such as magazines and newspapers, job-related materials, and religious publications. (Author/KC)

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Reading Habits of Students in Adult Basic Education and High School Equivalency Programs

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Abstract

A sample of 217 students enrolled in two Mississippi junior colleges' ABE or GED classes were administered a questionnaire to examine their reading habits. The sample was studied as a whole and by the demographic variables of race, gender, age (14-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-67), and reading level based on their TABE scores ($\leq$ 5.0, 5.1-7.9, $\geq$8.0). The most salient conclusion was that as a group, they were by no means non-readers, though their time spent reading is less than the general population. Most reading was "educational" (including news), and least was "job related" and "recreational." Though most have read a book (or part of a book such as a Bible) in the last six months, they are generally not book owners though most do subscribe to or buy regularly a newspaper or magazine. A plurality (44%) felt they were "good" readers. Respor to several questionnaire items varied by race, age, and TABE score.

Reading Habits of Students in Adult Basic Education and High School Equivalency Programs

Research interest in the reading habits of Americans has a tradition spanning the twentieth century. With the emergence of the educational specialization of reading, research has clearly become more procedurally sophisticated. Further, it has expanded to include the mechanics of acquiring literacy (especially, of course, in children) and in the various cognitive processes and methodological techniques which enhance or retard learning how to read. Interest has also persisted, however, in both what is read and the habits associated with reading. Much of the focus has been and continues to be on the reading habits of children, but historically there has been considerable attention devoted to the reading habits and practices of adults. Examination of the current literature possibly suggests some abatement of that attention, especially in the adult education literature, as compared to earlier decades (the 1930s, for example). Yet interest in what adults read, how often they read, where they acquire their reading materials, and other issues germane to their reading practices continues. Perhaps such interest deserves a modest renascence now that two separate generations of adults have experienced a lifelong exposure to television.

During the decades of the 1920s and 30s in particular,

reading research among adults was, as Karetsky (1982) has noted, prompted largely by the adult education movement and its emphasis on an informed and enlightened public as a bulwark of democracy. It is in that context that Lindeman would focus on "the democratic man" and Dewey would write his most important work, Democracy and Education. The perceived connections of reading, learning, an enlightened citizenry, and a stable democracy imbued librarians, adult educators (in their numerous and variegated roles) and others of the between-the-wars period with an interest in the reading activities of adults and a desire to promote reading. A perusal of the first few volumes of the Journal of Adult Education (American) is illustrative. "Reading with a Purpose" programs evolved, and one advertisement for such a program appears in the first volume (1929). One of the subcommittees of the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE) was named simply Reading Habits, and members included E. L. Thorndike and the dean of reading research and first president of the International Reading Association, William S. Gray. Especially suggestive of the link between adult education and reading are some of the JAE articles published in those early years: "What They Read" by Ruth Munroe (1929), co-author with Gray on the classic The Reading Interests and Habits of Adults (1929); "What Do Adults Want to Learn: A Study of Reading Interests and Needs" (1930); "Who Reads Thomas Hardy" (1931);

"Rehabilitation Through Books" (1931); "Who Reads the Greek Classics Today" (1932); "Librarians and Educators" (1933); "Librarians as Educators" (1933); and "What Makes a Book Readable?" (1934). Additionally, advertisements for the American Library Association (which had a Commission on The Library and Adult Education) appear in the Journal of Adult Education, promoting such books as Readable Books in Many Subjects, The Worker and the Library, What People Want to Read About, and Making the Most of Books. The demarcation between many adult educators and librarians was blurred as both seemed to identify adult education largely with intellectual growth, and reading was the key to both.

Gray and Monroe's The Reading Interests and Habits of Adults ([1929] one of the eight Studies in Adult Education undertaken by the Carnegie Corporation, AAAE, and ALA, which also included Thorndike's Adult Learning and Libraries and Adult Education) summarized a remarkable one hundred or so studies concerning adult reading conducted between the years 1900 and 1928 by advertisers, publishers, librarians, and agricultural groups. Many of these studies indicated that reading patterns were largely affected by educational level, occupation, and accessibility to materials. Additionally, the authors conducted their own study with improved research methods and found a "close relationship between the amount read and such factors as the

general level of intelligence . . . the extent of literacy, the efficiency of the schools, the accessibility of library materials, and the amount of [agricultural and industrial] productivity of the community" (p. 261). They were also concerned with the "quality" of reading, especially in fiction, and with "elevating reading tastes" (p. 265) away from the "trite and sensational" and often lubricious material many readers seemed to prefer. Other important researchers of the period included Douglas Waples, Leon Carnovsky, Ruth Strang, William Haygood, and Ralph W. Tyler, who co-authored with Waples What People Want to Read About: A Study of Group Interests and a Survey of Problems in Adult Reading (1931) and at least three other studies, including "What Do Adults Want to Learn: A Study of Reading Interests and Needs" in the second volume of the Journal of Adult Education (1930).

Among more recent studies, several have noted relationships between reading habits and a number of different variables. Bogart (1965) has discussed the positive relationships of newspaper reading with income, occupational status, educational level, and activity in voluntary associations. Non-readers tended to be rural, of lower income, and from families headed by farmers, unskilled laborers, and the unemployed. Similarly, Kingston (1979) concluded that reading behavior among the retired is correlated with educational level and socioeconomic

status. In an important nationwide study by Sharon (1974) of 5,067 adults, reading habits were examined in the context of several variables. Again, higher socio-economic status individuals tended to read a greater diversity of materials, and a clear progression of educational level with number of minutes read per day was found: less than 6th grade, 55 minutes; attended or completed high school, 98 minutes; attended college, 157 minutes; and college graduates, 194 minutes. Additionally, males read somewhat more than females (113 to 101 minutes), whites read more than blacks (113 to 61 minutes), and newspaper reading substantially dominated over magazine and book reading. Similarly, Guthrie and Seifert (1983) examined 109 employed residents of a 6,000 member community and found higher occupatioanl status and educational level to be related to amount of reading (readers with less than high school read 1.7 hours per day; readers with education at or above high school, read 3.7 hours per day). However, they found women (all educational levels) to be reading considerably more than men (3.1 hours to 1.9). In a study of 99 employees at various occupational levels in a Fortune 500 company, Kirsch and Guthrie (1984) found reading content and volume varied by occupation and by setting (work vs. leisure). Somewhat unexpectedly, perhaps, those employees designated as "clerical" read more total minutes per day in both work and leisure settings than "managers/professionals,"

"technicians/skilled," and "semi-skilled/service," and, in the leisure setting, "clerical" employees read the most in four of six content categories.

Some research has attempted to examine reading practices among those in a particular demographic group. For example, several studies have been conducted on the elderly (Harvey & Dutton, 1979; Heisel & Larson, 1984; Kingston, 1979; Romani, 1973; Scales & Biggs, 1983). The primary conclusion appears to be that age alone is far less a predictor of reading habits than educational level or socio-economic status. The aged are a very heterogeneous group whose reading habits are almost as varied as the population at large, though they do less job-related reading. However, very few studies, in contrast to those on the elderly, have examined adult reading habits primarily as a function of ethnicity or gender--Heisel and Larson (1984) on the black elderly and Appleton and Cranney (1981) on Mormon women being exceptions. A review of current literature revealed only three other studies which examined the reading practices of the undereducated adult. Heathington and Koskinen (1982) studied 91 adults aged 16-76, all of whom read below the fifth grade level. They found that religious materials received the highest interest with job-related materials and consumer-related materials also rating high. The authors emphasized the desirability of determining interests in designing and structuring educational

programs. Empirical evidence supporting that view was also offered by Hutchison (1978), who found, using control and experimental groups, that reading achievement was greater for learners who were taught using materials in which they themselves had expressed an interest. Gillis and Longnion (1982) interviewed 20 adults reading below sixth grade level and found that readers wanted to read a variety of materials, including (though not prioritized) job-related, consumer-related, religious, and fictional materials as well as newspapers and magazines.

The term "undereducated" is elusive and resistant to a consensus definition. Jonathan Kozol (1985) estimates that 34% of American adults read below a ninth grade level, and 14% below fifth; Stedman and Kaestle (1987) conclude that 30% of American adults read at less than an eighth grade level, but only 7% read below fifth. Nevertheless, they concur that around one third of the American adult population is functioning at a reading level which can be described as marginal or less. To many, a high school credential is the minimum standard of educational attainment (though no guarantee of ability), suggesting that anything less constitutes being "undereducated." Given that 26% of the adult population twenty-five and older do not have high school credentials (Statistical Abstract of the United States 1987), the general inattention to the reading habits of this

population suggests a lacuna in the research literature which needs to be addressed.

Statement of the Problem

The present study sought to add to the limited research on the reading practices of the undereducated adult using a comparatively large sample. To what extent were reading practices or habits associated with the demographic variables of gender, race, and age? Additionally, the study sought to determine to what extent reading practices were associated with the reading level of those traditionally regarded as undereducated. Are the "undereducated" a homogeneous group where those at or below the fifth grade reading level (as measured by the TABE) read similar content with similar regularity and purpose as those above fifth grade skills but below eighth, and with those above eighth but below twelfth? Or do their reading practices (especially purpose, content, frequency of reading, and reading matter) appreciably vary according to reading ability? And finally, what implications does a greater understanding of the undereducated's reading habits have for adult basic and secondary education program design?

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 217 adults enrolled in ABE or GED classes at

six sites sponsored by two Mississippi junior colleges. Sites were both rural and urban. Subjects were selected from a pool of over 500 students enrolled in these programs. Selection was determined by attendance on the night of the questionnaire administration and student willingness to participate. Almost exactly two-thirds (67%) were female, with 33% male; 65% were black, 35% were white. In the distribution of ages, 28% were aged 14-19; 36%, 20-29; 17%, 30-39; 11%, 40-49; and 9%, 50-67. All students had taken the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) soon after enrollment; 19% scored at or below the fifth grade level; 57% scored between grade level 5.1 and 7.9; and 24% scored at or above the eighth grade level. Time in the program since enrollment averaged four months. Demographic cross tabulations were determined (see Table 1) such that, for example, 19% of the total N of 217 were black and male.

Insert Table 1 about here

Instrument

The instrument was devised by the researchers based on a review of extant literature and the researchers' knowledge of and experience with this population. A pilot of the questionnaire was conducted with the cooperation of administrators and a sample of 15 ABE/GED students in the Hattiesburg Education and Literacy Project (HELP), a community-

based program sponsored by private funds and the University of Southern Mississippi. Based on the pilot, a number of refinements of the instrument were made, including the addition of options to several questions, and it was then printed on a single page. Administration of the questionnaire was conducted during a class session by teachers familiar with the research project. The researchers asked the teachers to use their own discretion as to whether or not the questionnaire should be administered to some individuals orally. This was only rarely necessary, though teachers were available to explain or clarify any item. The questionnaire allowed multiple responses and required a name since the researchers would need to collect the instruments and supply a TABE score. Those who chose to participate (virtually all in attendance) were assured that the questionnaires would be used for research purposes only. The questionnaire and the percent of the total N (217) who checked each question item are presented in Table 2. For several questions, the item percentages exceed 100% due to multiple responses.

Insert Table 2 about here

Data Collection and Analysis

The 217 usable questionnaires were numerically coded,

entered onto coding sheets, and entered into a Honeywell mainframe computer. Cross tabulations were computed for each demographic variable by demographic variable (e.g., gender by age, Table 1); demographic variable by reading habits question (e.g., gender by reading frequency, Table 3); and reading habits question by reading habits question (e.g., reading frequency by type of books liked). Tests of significance on these cross tabulations were not performed due to the fact that the questionnaire contained several items that used multiple responses. Thus responses on these items were dependent.

Results

Table 1 presents the total percentages for each demographic group and the percentages of the sample (N = 217) when the demographic items are cross-tabulated. For example, 19% of N were black males, 46% were black females, 13% were white males, and 21% were white females (does not total 100% due to rounding). For blacks, the largest age group was 20-29 (27%), while for whites the largest was 14-19 (15%). For both males and females the largest age group was 20-29 (11% and 26%, respectively). A reading level of 5.1 to 7.9 based on TABE scores was the most frequent for all groups--blacks, whites, males, females, and all five age categories. The sample also resulted in a black-white ratio of 65% to 35%, while the female to male ratio was 67% to 33%. The largest age category was 20-

29 (36%), with teenagers representing the second largest (28%). The reading level groups based on the TABE were $\leq$ 5.0 (19%), 5.1-7.9 (57%), and $\geq$ 8.0 (24%).

Table 2 provides the percent of the total sample who responded to each question item. Since multiple responses were not discouraged, several questions have total percents exceeding 100%. Forty-five percent said they read daily, with 42 percent reading approximately one to two hours per week. Only five percent noted that they read seven or more hours per week (or an hour or more per day). Almost half claimed that their reading was educational, a category including news. Job-related and recreational reading were virtually tied as the areas of least reading. Almost two-thirds subscribed to or bought regularly at least one newspaper or magazine, and two-thirds did at least occasional reading in other newspapers or magazines. Local and state news got most of the attention in newspapers while "people" got most of the attention in magazines. Book preferences revealed a tie (27%) among books about people, inspirational and religious books, and romance and Western novels. Almost three-quarters claimed to have read a book in the last six months, but of those who did not, over half said they did not have the time. Nearly half of all reading materials were purchased, and books, magazines, and newspapers constituted the primary, regular reading materials of 71% of the

sample. Most (39%) claimed to read more than they used to, but 26% felt that their reading was irregular. Finally, only small percentages perceived their own reading ability to be "excellent" (9%) or "poor" (7%), with 44% feeling that they were "good" readers and 41% seeing their reading as "fair."

Table 3 presents the most frequently cited response option to each questionnaire item by demograhic variable. Some caution is necessary, however, where the percentages are low as this may indicate a general distribution among several response options or a close second choice, or both. For example, "daily" was the most frequently cited response to the question of reading frequency (1) by all demographic groups, but whites cited it only 35% of the time whereas blacks cited it 48% of the time. However, whites cited "several times per day" slightly more often than blacks (25% to 23%), but cited "not often" almost twice as often (25% to 13%). One to two hours per week was selected most often on the question of reading volume (2), though for males 1-2 hours per week tied with less than one hour. On the yes-no questions "Do you subscribe to or buy regularly newspaper or magazines?" (5) and "Have you read a book in the last six months?" (10) all groups responded affirmatively more often than negatively. This was also true for question 6, "Do you read other newspapers or magazines sometimes?" except for the 30-39 year old group. Most groups claimed that most of

their reading was "educational" (3), but "recreational" predominated with whites and the ≥8.0 TABE cohort, and "religious" clearly predominated in the 50-67 age category.

On the contrasting question (4) concerning the area in which the least reading was done, most percentages were under 40%, suggesting no clear choice, with "recreational," "religious," and "educational" all being cited by at least one group, and "job related" being cited by seven. The most frequently read subject in newspapers (7) was the local and state news, but for the two younger groups and the ≥8.0 TABE group, advertisements received the most attention. "People" predominated in all demographic groups on the question of most frequently read subject in magazines (8), except among males, who selected "sports." The most preferred books (9) found females, whites, and the ≥8.0 TABE group more interested in fiction than males, blacks, and the two lower TABE groups. "Inspiration and religion" was first choice for males, blacks, and the oldest group, and this choice tied with cookbooks in the 40-49 age group and the ≤5.0 TABE group. Only the 30-39 age group cited "don't read books much," tying with "romance and Westerns." When asked what <u>type</u> of book had been read in the last six months (10.1), the numbers thinned considerably, with only the oldest group citing any book type more than 19%

(religious books at 28%). This was despite the fact that majorities claimed to have read books in the last six months. Of those who had not read books in the last six months (11), "no time" was the culprit, except for the youngest group, who "preferred other reading." On the number of books owned (12), males, females, blacks, three of the five age groups, and the two lower TABE groups all noted that they owned five or less. Except for the lowest TABE group, who received most of their reading materials through the mail, all groups bought most of their reading materials (13). All groups indicated that they read very little other than books, magazines, and newspapers (14), though most groups stated that they read "more than they used to" (15). As to their own perception of their reading ability, males, blacks, the three oldest groups and the two lower TABE groups saw their ability as "fair," while females, whites, the 14-19 and 20-29 age groups, and the $\geq$8.0 TABE group considered themselves "good" readers.

Cross-tabulations of responses to the questionnaire items were also examined. Concerning reading frequency, for example, most subjects said that they read daily, but total reading time was 1-2 hours per week, suggesting perhaps that most were "snippet" readers. Of those who do not read often, two-thirds said that their ability is "fair"; of the daily readers, two-thirds said their ability is "good." Reading frequency was also

correlated with: (1) subscriptions to newspapers and magazines (only the "not often" group had less than 60% who were subscribers); (2) reading of local and state news (the "not often" group being mostly "sports" readers); (3) and readership of books, with majorities in all response groups claiming to have read a book in the last six months.

On the question of number of hours spent reading per week, the options were < 1, 1 or 2, 3 or 4, 5 or 6, and 7 or more. Several relationships emerged. The more hours they spent reading, the more books they owned. In all but the < 1 group, most said their reading ability was "good" (in the <1 group, most said "fair"); and that most of their reading was "educational" (the <1 group mostly reading "job-related" materials). All groups were primarily purchasing materials, but more frequent readers were also utilizing library or school materials. Those whose reading matter was either "job related" or "educational" tended to own less than five books; the "religious" and "recreational" readers tended to own 21-50. Book ownership was also correlated with perception of reading ability (the "fair" and "poor" readers owned less than five, while the "good" and "excellent" readers most often owned between 21 and 50) and with subscription to newspapers and magazines (non-subscribers usually owning less than five, and subscribers usually owning between 21 and 50).

Discussion

One clear inference from this study is that ABE and GED students are by no means a homogeneous group of non-readers. Their reading habits often vary according to their demographic grouping; and though they apparently read less in volume than the general population, they are readers--44% even considering themselves good readers. As a sidelight, the study also tends to confirm participation patterns in ABE/GED programs: primarily female (67%); primarily young (with 64% being 29 or less); and under-represented by those with the lowest abilities (19% scoring at or below the 5.0 grade level in reading on the TABE).

Sharon (1974) found the volume of reading to be correlated with educational level, race, and gender. He found that even individuals with less than a sixth grade education were reading 55 minutes per day. The present study found reading volume to be far less. It is possible that the subjects read question 2 as hours per day rather than hours per week, though the latter is clearly stated. But further, since Sharon found greater reading volume among males and whites, the two-to-one majorities of females and blacks in this sample could also account for some of the difference. At any rate, race and age, and to a certain extent gender do relate to some of the reading practices of those with less than twelfth grade reading ability.

Of "job-related," "educational" (including news), "religious," and "recreational," nearly half noted that most of their reading is educational, a finding which reflects the high subscription to newspapers or magazines, the strong interest in local and state news, and possibly the fact that they are in an ABE/GED class where study is presumed. Somewhat surprisingly, especially considering the general youth of the sample, the least reading was job-related (cited by 32% of the sample) with recreational reading right behind (31%). One possible inference is that the subjects were in or aspired to occupations which required little job-related reading; another possibility is that they failed to consider the brief, on-the-job reading many jobs require; a third possibility is that many were unemployed and/or were homemakers with little interest in employment.

Despite the low level of recreational (i.e., entertainment) reading, nearly half of the magazine readers enjoyed articles about people, and almost three quarters had read a book in the last six months (compared to 55% in a 1979 book industry study [Guthrie, 1979]). Less than a fifth observed that they "don't read books much." In light of this, the finding that nearly a third own less than five books and nearly half own less than ten was unexpected. Since nearly half of all their reading materials are purchased, implying permanent ownership, it appears that few books are purchased or that they are discarded

or given away. It is almost certain that partial reading of books (e.g., the Bible, cookbooks) may account for the 72% who have read a book in the last six months.

The expected association between higher reading ability, as measured by the TABE, and certain "positive" reading habits was generally confirmed and tends to corroborate the conclusion of others (Gray & Munroe, 1929; Karetzky, 1982; Sharon, 1973-74) that educational level or ability significantly influences some reading practices. While the $\geq$ 8.0 reading level group did exhibit several of the same habits as the two lower groups, they were more likely to say their reading ability was "good" (as opposed to "fair"), to consider their reading recreational, to read fiction, to have read a book in the last six months, and to own a larger number of books. In short, the $\geq$ 8.0 TABE group do not see themselves as poor or even fair readers, but good readers who read largely for entertainment and fun. Thus, in partial answer to the question posed in the problem statement, there do appear to be differences between the highest reading level and the other two levels in terms of reading content and purpose, as well as self-perception of reading ability. Although "1-2 hours per week" was the most frequent selection among the reading volume options by all three ability groups, there was a steady (though not statistically significant) upward progression of raw scores on the TABE from those who read less than one hour

per week ($\bar{x}$ = 55.02 total reading raw score) to those who read seven or more hours ($\bar{x}$ = 61.45 total reading raw score).

Given the significant number of the American adult population whose reading ability can only be defined as sub-standard in an increasingly technological and print-oriented society, attention to the reading habits and interests of this population is a resonable precursor to curricular design in adult basic and secondary education programs. Such programs generally eschew materials and approaches suitable only to children, but greater individualizing of instruction based on individual reading interests is a logical next step.

The subjects of this study, who were participants in an ABE or GED program, are neither illiterate nor "aliterate"--those who can read but do not (Thimmesch, 1984). Questions about the quality of their reading matter, so interesting to researchers of several decades ago, are ignored here as they are questions more germane to literary discussions. Yet a society in which printed matter is so pervasive necessarily places value on reading skill, if not taste. How that skill can be enhanced with adult basic and secondary students might reasonably begin with an examination of the reading habits and interests they bring to the ABE/GED setting.

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Table 1

Demographic Cross Tabulations by Percent of N

		MALE	FEMALE	14-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-67	≤5.0 (19%)	5.1-7.9 (57%)	≥8.0 (24%)
Black	65%	19*	46	13	27	11	8	7	17	40	8
White	35%	13	21	15	10	6	3	1	2	17	16
Male	33%			10	11	6	3	3	6	18	8
Female	67%			18	26	11	7	6	13	39	16
14-19	28%								2	19	7
20-29	36%								10	18	9
30-39	17%								3	9	4
40-49	11%								2	6	2
50-67	9%								2	5	2

N = 217

*Read: 19 percent of total N were black and male. Percents may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

Table 2

Percent of Total Sample's Responses to Each Question Item

Directions: Please answer the following questions with a check in the blank space that best fits you. For some questions, you may wish to check more than one answer.

1. Would you say you read . . .

24%	Several times a day	15%	Weekly
44%	Daily	17%	Not Often

2. About how many hours do you read a week? (rough estimate)

21%	Less than 1	7%	5 or 6
42%	1 or 2	5%	7 or more
25%	3 or 4		

3. Would you say that most of your reading is . . .

27%	Job-related	24%	Religious
47%	Educational (including news)		
28%	Recreational (entertainment)		

4. In which area do you do the least reading?

32%	Job-related	25%	Religious
23%	Educational (including news)		
31%	Recreational (entertainment)		

5. Do you subscribe to or buy regularly any newspapers or magazines?

37%	No	63%	Yes _____ If yes, which ones?

6. Do you read any other newspapers or magazines sometimes?

34%	No	66%	Yes _____ If yes, which ones?

7. If you read newspapers, what gets most of your attention?

40%	Local/state news	7%	Comics
11%	National/international news	10%	About equally divided
		8%	Don't read one regularly
9%	Sports	5%	Obituaries
15%	Sale Ads and Want Ads		

Table 2 (Continued)

8. If you read magazines regularly, what articles get most of your attention?

47%	About people	19%	Fictional short stories
30%	Fashion	23%	Cooking
22%	Sports	11%	"How to" information
29%	News	5%	Other
22%	Religion	8%	Don't read one regularly

9. What kind of books do you like to read?

16%	Don't read books much	27%	Inspirational/religious books
11%	Sports or sports people	24%	Cookbooks and home economics
27%	Books about people	27%	Romance or Western books
12%	Adventure-travel	11%	Academic (school) subjects
20%	Self improvement (like beauty, popularity)	7%	"How to" books or manuals
		9%	Other

10. Have you read any books in the above categories in the last six months?

29% No 72% Yes _____ If yes, which categories?

11. If you have not read any books in the last six months, indicate the reason that fits you best?

53%	Don't have time	17%	Prefer other leisure activities
9%	Books aren't my thing	5%	Other (please specify)
26%	Prefer reading other things		

12. About how many books do you own?

29%	Less than 5	18%	11-20	8%	51-100
18%	6-10	24%	21-50	3%	More than 100

13. Where do you get most of the materials you read?

23%	From friends	24%	From school or library
24%	From employer	15%	From church
46%	Buy them at store or newstands	29%	Through mail

14. Are there materials other than books, magazines, or newspapers that you read regularly?

71% No 29% Yes _____ If yes, what are they?

Table 2 (Continued)

15. Which best describes your reading?

33%	I read about as much as I always have
39%	I read a lot more than I used to
26%	Reading is sort of "off and on" for me
7%	I'll probably read less once I finish my studies or job training

16. Would you say that your reading ability is . . .

9%	Excellent	44%	Good	41%	Fair	7%	Poor

Note: Multiple responses occurred on Questions 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, and 15. Thus percents represent the total number of responses of the 217 person sample and exceed 100%.

N = 217

Table 3

Most Frequently Cited Responses to Questionnaire Items by Demographic Variable

	MALES N = 71	FEMALES N = 146	BLACKS N = 142	WHITES N = 75	14-19 yrs. N = 60	20-29 yrs. N = 79	30-39 yrs. N = 36	40-49 yrs. N = 23	50-67 yrs. N = 19	≤ 5.0 TABE N = 42	5.1-7.9 TABE N = 123	≥ 8.0 TABE N = 52
1. Reading Frequency	Daily 42%	Daily 44%	Daily 48%	Daily 35%	Daily 37%	Daily 41%	Daily 44%	Daily 46%	Daily 74%	Daily 50%	Daily 43%	Daily 40%
2. Reading Hours/Week	Tie: 1;1-2 31%	1-2 48%	1-2 41%	1-2 49%	1-2 43%	1-2 39%	1-2 57%	1-2 32%	1-2 58%	1-2 38%	1-2 44%	1-2 42%
3. Most reading is . . .	Educational 45%	Educational 48%	Educational 51%	Recreational 43%	Educational 45%	Educational 47%	Educational 38%	Educational 65%	Religious 67%	Educational 43%	Educational 49%	Recreational 46%
4. Least reading is . . .	Job-related 28%	Tie: Job/Recreational 33%	Recreational 36%	Job-related 35%	Religious 35%	Job-related 34%	Recreational 36%	Educational 38%	Job-related 53%	Job-related 41%	Recreational 31%	Job-related 44%
5. Subscribe to newspapers or magazines	Yes 50%	Yes 65%	Yes 63%	Yes 64%	Yes 55%	Yes 60%	Yes 57%	Yes 78%	Yes 94%	Yes 73%	Yes 64%	Yes 65%
6. Occasional other newspaper or magazine	Yes 62%	Yes 69%	Yes 67%	Yes 66%	Yes 60%	Yes 72%	No 56%	Yes 75%	Yes 95%	Yes 74%	Yes 64%	Yes 65%
7. Subjects most read in newspapers	Local, state news 35%	Local, state news 43%	Local, state news 44%	Local, state news 34%	Ads 42%	Ads 41%	Local, state news 42%	Local, state news 55%	Local, state news 90%	Local, state news 35%	Local, state news 43%	Ads 39%
8. Subjects most read in magazines	Sports 44%	People 54%	People 47%	People 45%	People 40%	People 51%	People 46%	Tie: People/ Religion 43%	People 53%	People 51%	People 46%	People 42%
9. Books most liked	Inspiration/ Religion 27%	Romance/ Western 37%	Inspiration/ Religion 33%	Romance/ Western 42%	People 32%	Romance/ Western 34%	Tie: Don't read/Romance /Western 31%	Tie: Cook/ Religion 48%	Religion 83%	Tie: Cook/ Religion 26%	People 29%	Romance/ Western 45%
10. Read a book in last 6 months	Yes 67%	Yes 74%	Yes 73%	Yes 68%	Yes 57%	Yes 82%	Yes 55%	Yes 82%	Yes 94%	Yes 76%	Yes 64%	Yes 86%

Table 3 (Continued)

		MALES N = 71	FEMALES N = 146	BLACKS N = 142	WHITES N = 75	14-19 yrs. N = 60	20-29 yrs. N = 79	30-39 yrs. N = 36	40-49 yrs. N = 23	50-67 yrs. N = 19	≤ 5.0 TABE N = 42	5.1-7.9 TABE N = 123	≥ 8.0 TABE N = 52
10.1	Type books read last 6 months	Inspiration/ Religion 12%	Romance/ Western 16%	Inspiration/ Religion 13%	Romance/ Western 15%	Romance/ Western 14%	Inspiration/ Religion 13%	Romance/ Western 18%	Inspiration/ Religion 14%	Inspiration/ Religion 28%	Tie: Cook/ Religion 10%	Tie: Relig/ Romance/ Western 10%	Romance/ Western 16%
11.	Why no books read last 6 months	No time 54%	No time 32%	No time 49%	No time 61%	Prefer other reading 39%	No time 42%	No time 75%	No time 86%	No time 71%	Tie: No time /Prefer other 35%	No time 57%	No time 62%
12.	Number books owned	Less than 5 32%	Less than 5 28%	Less than 5 31%	21-50 38%	Less than 5 37%	6-10 28%	Less than 5 29%	Less than 5 30%	21-50 39%	Less than 5 33%	Less than 5 32%	21-50 31%
13.	Source of reading materials	Buy them 44%	Buy them 47%	Buy them 39%	Buy them 60%	Buy them 54%	Buy them 46%	Tie: Friends /Buy them 40%	Tie: Buy, Mail 30%	Buy them 50%	Mail 33%	Buy them 48%	Buy them 53%
14.	Materials read other than books, magazines, newspapers	No 67%	No 74%	No 69%	No 75%	No 74%	No 70%	No 79%	No 60%	No 69%	No 60%	No 72%	No 79%
15.	What best describes your reading	More than used to 39%	More than used to 38%	More than used to 46%	Same as always 37%	More than used to 41%	More than used to 36%	Same as always 43%	Same as always 48%	More than used to 61%	More than used to 45%	More than used to 37%	More than used to 36%
16.	Is your reading ability . . .	Fair 56%	Good 52%	Fair 45%	Good 52%	Good 47%	Good 51%	Fair 40%	Fair 44%	Fair 53%	Fair 50%	Fair 45%	Good 54%

NOTE: For all response options, see Table 2. Low percentages should be regarded with some caution, as they may indicate wide distributions or close second choices.

N = 217